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MEMORANDUM FOR: ASSISTANT DIRECTOR FOR POLICY COORDINATION
SUBJECT: Transmittal of Memorandum

1. Attached hereto, for your information and retention, is one copy of a memorandum, Subject: Foreign Intelligence Services' Knowledge of Albanian Operation, which has been prepared for the Director.

2. When you have had an opportunity to read the attachment, we should like to discuss with you some of the problems raised therein.

[]
Assistant Director
Special Operations

Attachment

DECLASSIFIED AND RELEASED BY
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
SOURCE/METHOD/EXEMPTION 3B2B
NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT
DATE 2007

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MEMORANDUM FOR: THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

SUBJECT: Foreign Intelligence Services' Knowledge of Albanian Operation

Part I of this memorandum reviews what information we know other (foreign) intelligence services to possess regarding the Albanian Operation. Part II deals with approaches made to our representatives by representatives of other services in connection with this operation.

I. Foreign Intelligence Services' Knowledge of the Albanian Operation

A. []

1. According to information from an [] it was being said in May 1949 that the Western Powers, particularly Great Britain and France, were attempting to oust Enver Hoxha and reestablish Zag in Albania. Since this solution would greatly alleviate the Greek situation and make the British position in the Mediterranean more secure, it was alleged, Great Britain was backing Zag's claim to be Albania's legitimate ruler on the grounds that he had been freely chosen by the people and had never acknowledged the Italian conquest.
2. On 14 July 1949 a person closely connected with an [] advised an American intelligence officer that Abas Kupa (Zagist leader in Rome) and members of the Balli Kombetar were making every effort to spread the news of their support by the British and Americans, with Abas Kupa claiming that all his wishes expressed the desires of the United States. This person said that his investigation had failed to confirm the visit of an American representative in Rome as alleged by Kupa, and concluded that the Albanian Committee was not backed by the Americans. However, he confirmed that a British officer named [] had conferred with Kupa until 10 July, when the former departed for London. As a result, this person concluded that the Albanian Committee was a British maneuver. In this connection he mentioned that

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Abus Rupi, although claiming American support, had confided to other Albanians that "the Americans are useless and ignorant, whereas the British are able statements, capable of solving Italian problems."

3. We were subsequently advised by an [] that, on 22 July, a Britisher appeared at the [] TRO camp at Bari, Italy, and collected 21 Albanians out of a group of more than 100 who had arrived there from Greece at the end of March. These 21 Albanians, evidently chosen on the basis of their political background, partisan activity, physical condition and military experience, were removed from the Bari camp, allegedly to Brindisi, that same day; however, from alibi statements made by some of them, the resulting Albanians concluded that they were not going to Brindisi, as announced, but that they were to be used as partisans in Albania or Macedonia or that they would be employed by the "Allies" on intelligence missions in Albania and/or Yugoslavia. (All 21 of the persons named appear on a list of 30 Albanians reported by OPC as being recruited by the British.)

4. Another Italian intelligence [] informed us in mid-August 1949 that the Albanian colony in Rome had been in a ferment for some time as the result of recent developments in the Balkans, but added that this should cause us no surprise to the Americans if it was true that a number of the United States Embassy staff in Rome named Sterens had been advising Albanians in Italy not to emigrate to the United States, since it would soon be possible for them to return to their own country. Sterens apparently told certain Albanian leaders that Albania will soon become a sort of proving ground for anti-Soviet activity by the United States, which, in view of Russia's failure to deal with Tito, hopes to use the Albanian policy to test Russian reactions. Going on what they have allegedly learned from friends close to the American Embassy, Albanian refugees in Rome believe that the Albanian "affair" will be settled in 1950. They understand that action in northern Albania will be in the hands of guerrilla bands recruited by Gani Kryeziu and that responsibility for southern Albania will be assigned to the Balli Kombetar, despite the fact that these two groups are suspicious of one another. (The Sterens mentioned above is believed to be a minor Embassy functionary who was born in Albania and became an American by naturalization.)

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5.

The same [] who reported the above said that the Balli Kombetar is now busily engaged in giving military training to its younger members. He said a Ballist militia was being formed at the (Druglasso camp (Turin) and that similar training was being given at Lefkerna, in strictest secrecy, under the auspices of the American intelligence services. While enlisting the moment for mass actions, agents were also being trained for individual secret assignments, and several agents and subagents now operating in Albania were originally trained in these centers. Zef Logoreci, he reported, was recently called to the United States, where he is allegedly giving lessons in Albanian to young American officers and flyers who are scheduled to participate in the projected actions against Albania - or so he told his friends before leaving the Cinescitta DP camp.

6.

The HHI, under the leadership of Ismail Vokori, is also (according to this [] representative) anxious to organize an intelligence and sabotage service in the interior of Albania. Father Mergulj, Secretary of the Albanian Refugee Committee, alleged to operate under the special protection of Ambassador Andrew Ladd of the U. S. National Catholic Welfare Conference, has billeted more than 50 persons to be used when the proper time comes for a blood bath in Albania. One of these, Kol Gani, is rumored to have participated in the training courses (described in paragraph 4 above) which were said by some to have been organized by Italian Naval Intelligence and by others to be sponsored by an American intelligence service.

7.

The Albanian emigres are encouraged by the apparent failure of River Hamba's mission to Moscow, which did not result in a military assistance pact or any considerable economic aid for Albania; this leads the emigres to believe that the Soviet Union does not intend to commit itself heavily in Albania. In view of the omitted annihilation of the Albanians in Italy and the speculation occasioned by the keeping of 21 Albanians in the Cinescitta DP camp under British protection, and since Leftist political circles and representatives of eastern European countries in Rome know of these things (said the []), it would be impossible now to keep secret the reports of the concentration of Albanians at Lefkerna and the source of instruction reportedly entrusted to the Italian Navy.

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8.

On 27 August an Italian intelligence official was approached by Ismail Dafa, a member of the Balli Kombetar, who said he had been instructed by the leaders of the Balli Kombetar to investigate the possibility of cooperating with the Italians in para-military operations against Albania. Although Dafa did not specify for whom he was acting, he conveyed the impression that he received orders from members of the Albanian Liberation Committee. He received the reply that, since the Balli Kombetar belonged to a committee enjoying British and American support, it was difficult to understand why Dafa and his friends should turn to the Italians, whose support would be very minor as compared with that which the British and Americans could provide.

9.

In addition to the above cases showing familiarity with the Albanian Operation on the part of various Italian intelligence services, it may fairly be presumed that other bits of information which are known to various Albanians in Italy or Greece (such as the recent transfer by the British of 21 Albanians from Italy to Malta) are also known to one or more Italian intelligence services. It is also known to them that the American Embassy in Rome applied pressure to effect the release from prison of those known, one of the members of the Committee, ostensibly in order for him to leave immediately for the United States. In addition, the fact of the British invitation to Naim Murta Gjend to join the Albanian Liberation Committee is known to at least one Italian service, which may also have obtained other information from members of the (Mladen Kombetar Independent - National Independence Bloc) in Italy.

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B.

10. On 11 June 1949 Greek Minister Capsalis in Rome told leaders of the ENKI that the Greek Government regarded as very important the formation of a united Albanian political committee. He said that the Greeks desired Albanian friendship and that, to obtain it, they would renounce their claims to northern Epirus (southern Albania). The Greek Minister, repeating many of the views known to be held by British Major Hartbert, emphasized the desire of the Greeks to see Kishot Frasheri included in such a committee, in view of the strong support he enjoyed from the British Foreign Office. (This item, like those in paragraphs 11 and 12 below, may reasonably be assumed to be known to one or more of the Greek intelligence services.)
11. On 4 July 1949 it was reported that Greek Consul Nikas, claiming that his visit had full British approval, had recently approached a number of ENKI members in the IRO Transit Camp at Bari, Italy, and invited them to return to Greece under the aegis of the Greek General Staff and to enjoy full board and lodging, a small monthly stipend, equality of opportunity on the Greek labor market, and the possibility of being of use to their country in special operations.
12. Greek Minister of Public Order was said to have stated, on 16 July 1949, that the Greek Government had decided to relinquish all claims to northern Epirus (southern Albania) and to initiate a new era of Greco-Albanian collaboration. With the aid of her "Allies", Greece would create an Albanian resistance movement as soon as possible, in the hope that Haxha would be overthrown through armed rebellion before the end of this year.
13. On 3 August 1949 a spokesman for advised us that he was in possession of information that a political committee had been formed in Italy for the purpose of accomplishing the liberation of Albania from the Communist regime. His information was to the effect that the Balli Kombetar and Legjiteti (Fogist) parties had united, that the Koscovars were not

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participating for reasons of camouflage, and that Verlani's SKI was not taking part. The Central Committee, he said, included Mihat Frasheri as Chairman, Vasi (described as a Regist tribal chieftain from central Albania) and Deme Gjoni (presumably Hoxha Marka Gjoni). The "Allies" were alleged to have decided to separate from the Yugoslav side, where Gani Kryeziu had already, with Tito's help, organized impressive forces. Plans reportedly called for the transfer of the Committee to Kosovo, where 15,000 Albanians would revolt; thereupon the forces of Kryeziu would invade northern Albania, and uprisings would take place in central Albania (under Vasi) and southern Albania (under Frasheri). The uprisings in the rest of Albania would then remove the influence of Kryeziu and eliminate the control of Tito, after which a provisional government would be formed and a plebiscite held to determine the future form of government. This entire movement was allegedly being guided by the British through an Albanian in Rome named Salt (name: Said Kryeziu in report). The spokesman for this [] added that he was informed by secret sources, that the Italians wished to take over northern Albania, with Greece taking the southern part of the country.

14. [] reported that it was in possession of a letter, dated 4 August 1949, which had allegedly been intercepted from an Albanian in Italy and which stated that Mihat Frasheri and Abas Rupi went to Trieste on 1 August to discuss with a representative of Tito plans for an Albanian revolt. This letter said that Abas Rmeni and one of the Kryeziu brothers were also in Trieste.

15. The same [] informed us that, about 4 August 1949, a meeting of Albanian leaders was held in Trieste under the guidance of the British [] and [] to plan the overthrow of the Hoxha regime. The Albanian leaders reportedly included Mihat Frasheri, Abas Rupi, Said Kryeziu and Abas Rmeni from Italy, and Gani Kryeziu, Kol Gjeloshi (Gjelosh?) and two

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unnamed representatives of Tito from Yugoslavia. This meeting was reported to have ended without reaching any agreement, because Tito's representatives insisted that the Albanians surrender their claims to the Kossovo area, which they refused to do. Another meeting was allegedly set for Shoplj.

16. Following the meeting described above, according to information in the possession of this [] [] the British were making new efforts based on the Balli Kombetar, the Zagjete and the "Bumoni Group." Here Albanians were being taken from IRO camps on the pretext that they were being sent to Austria, while Abas Bumoni was reportedly remaining in Trieste with 24 Albanians. The spokesman for this Greek service said that the Italians believed the British were attempting to overthrow Hoxha and to bring Albania under Tito; he said that the Italians were much disappointed with the British, and that they (the Italians) desired to take over northern Albania with the Greeks taking the southern part of the country.
17. The same [] also said that the NKI believes that the British are striving to overthrow Hoxha, but with the intention of partitioning Albania between Yugoslavia and Greece. He said that Ali Kliasura had, through Keso Muka, his representative in Italy, threatened Frasheri, Rupi and Bumoni that, if they came to any agreement with Tito, he (Kliasura) would denounce them to the Albanian people. [] described Vasilaci as collaborating with the Albanian Catholics under the leadership of Marka Gjoni, and said that Kliasura would probably join them.
18. On 6 August it was reported that the Greeks in Rome had been told that Abas Rupi and Michael Frasheri (or their representatives) had flown to Yugoslavia in a British plane in mid-July in order to visit Tito. They allegedly claimed Western support in plans for the overthrow of the Hoxha regime.

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19.

On 18 August 1949, according to a [] the chief of the (British) Balkan Counter-Intelligence Service urgently requested the Greek service for 40 Albanian identity cards. Appearing greatly excited, the Britisher said that he had obtained some cards but needed still more. He reportedly received little help from the Greeks, who, according to this official, are concerned over British operations in Greece, of which they say they are not kept informed. In this case the Greek service believed that the British were bringing Albanians to Corfu, and sending them from there into Albania.

20.

[] advised us on 19 August 1949 that an important Britisher had that day called on Rendle and said that the best solution for the Allies lay in cooperation with Tito, on condition that Albania be divided into three parts, the northern part to go to Tito, the southern part to Greece, and the central part to remain Albanian. This official added that an officer of the Balkan Counter-Intelligence Service had left for London on 17 August to acquaint British officials with Greek views on Albanian matters.

21.

About 26 August Greek Minister Capoulis in Rome visited Prince Martin Gjoni and asked him to support the Albanian Liberation Committee; he was told that Martin Gjoni would do so only as a representative of the KLL. (It may be assumed that this fact is known to one or more Greek intelligence services.)

22.

On 5 September 1949 [] stated that Koco Muka, "of the Free Albanian Committee", was to arrive from Italy in order to discuss Albanian matters with Greek Minister of Public Order Boudila.

6. []

23.

On 16 August 1949 [] informed a representative of this organization that his service had received information to the effect that Gani Kryeziu, Tito-controlled Albanian resistance leader,

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had left Belgrade on 14 or 15 August for Rome for the purpose of meeting "your people", i. e., Americans or American representatives.

24. Later in the month a French agent in Rome was assigned the task of confirming the accuracy of the report that Gend Eyrebia was in Rome under a false name. This agent in question was unable to find any confirmation of this report among Albanians in his area.

25. Also in the latter part of August Jacques Chastler, French Minister in Tirana, informed the American Political Advisor in Tirana that the French Government was in possession of positive information that Albanian representatives had met recently with State Department officials in Washington for the purpose of negotiating for American recognition of Albania when the present Albanian regime has been overthrown.

B. []

26. In early August 1949 [] reported that dispatches had reached Belgrade to the effect that the United States was attempting to restore the Legislation of the present communist regime in Albania.

27. The same source also reported that Yugoslav leaders were considering the invasion of Albania via Greece on the pretext of protecting Yugoslav interests by liquidating the Greek guerrillas based in Albania. The agents among the guerrillas were expected to play a major role in liquidating the regime.

II. Interpretation by American Representatives of Rumors of Yugoslav Guerrillas in Connection with the Albanian Invasion.

R. []

28. In connection with the arrest of Abas Zeman in Smyrna an Italian official explained to an American representative that the Italian Government was in receipt of a report describing Zeman as a questionable person who had come

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to Italy from Germany, where he had been in touch with the British Consulate for assistance in securing his passage to Italy. Subsequently Rissani went to Trieste and - allegedly according to his own statement - made contact with a Yugoslav intelligence service for operations into Albania. In view of these circumstances the Italian Navy requested that Rissani be detained for interrogation upon his return to Italy. The Italian Foreign Office, at the instance of the American Embassy in Rome, had instructed the Italian Representation in Trieste to issue Rissani a visa for Italy (a visa of which none of the Italian agencies were advised); subsequently the American Embassy brought pressure to obtain Rissani's release, going as far as to say, "Washington wants the man released." It was understood that Rissani was to be released so that he might proceed at once to Washington.

29.

Subsequently, after an unsuccessful attempt was made to hold one of our representative responsible for Rissani's arrest (on the basis that Rissani's arrest and subsequent release were a natural way to obtain information about him, and satisfy the request for information made by this American representative), this Italian official explained that Rissani had been arrested because he had twice been refused an Italian visa; he was considered a British agent, and he was the brother of Italian methods of capture of Italians captured by the Albanian guerrillas during the war. While accepting responsibility for Rissani's arrest, this official said he would have proceeded differently if he had known that Rissani was of interest to the United States; he felt that American intelligence was to blame for labeling him as a first of himself by seeing that an American agent be arrested.

30.

In this connection, the perception of another person, strongly anti-British and close to the official published in paragraph 29, in mid-August violently denounced alleged British plans to regain influence in the Balkans through the overthrow of the Ruman government. He then expressed the view that Italian interests would be better served by an alliance with Rumania, or even with Hungary,

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them by having the British in control of the Straits of Otranto. It is considered possible that the arrest of Duman may have been prompted by anti-British feeling and the reports that Duman was a British agent.

21. On 5 September 1949 an Italian official returned unexpectedly to the command presence in Rome of those Duman who was released from arrest so that he might depart "immediately" for the Italian States.

22. On 11 July 1949 [] stated one of our representatives whether or not we really meant business and whether we would be prepared to supply 5,000 or more small arms for an Albanian revolt; this official was interested in an extensive sabotage program and seemed to think it was vital that British and American action become more evident. Ten days later, however, he said that his inquiry about the 5,000 small arms was unnecessary, since it would first have to be cleared with the Greek General Staff and Foreign Office.

23. On 18 July [] outlining plans for operations into Albania, reportedly expressed the greatest concern over Italian operations into Albania. He perceived the history of Italian aggression and said that neither the Greek General Staff nor the Greek people would approve unbridled cooperation with the Italians. He had refused to permit the Italians to operate out of Duray and believed that the Italians should not conduct operations south of a line drawn across Albania approximately at Elbasan. He also expressed great concern over the activities of those Duman in Italy, and reported as serious the fact that Duman had only according to his information, been in touch with Redbel.

24. In the latter part of July [] mentioned that certain sources had advised him that Subeyran Subeyran was attempting to leave Greece and proceed to Istanbul, to flee from there to Yugoslavia to be with his brothers, now working for Tito.

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35. From further conversation with [] it appeared that the Greek General Staff was eager to begin active operations in Albania for fear that Tito was hastening his plans to overthrow Haxha and set up his own regime in Albania. The fear of Italian operations was also very evident, and the official in question said that all Albanian agents in Italy were being covered by his own agents and that the actions of Americans in Italy were also being closely watched; he repeatedly showed the greatest concern over American actions in Italy.
36. About 1 August [] in discussing with our representative an Italian proposal to establish on Corfu an operational base against Albania, again expressed concern over Italian activities, and asked what backing the Italians were getting from the Americans.
37. On 3 August [] said that the British were setting up a strong operational base on Corfu, under the cover of the alleged operation of an observation or weather station.
38. On 29 August [] in question, in a conference with our representative, was greatly exercised over our good faith in dealing with him in view of the commonly rumored American backing of the Albanian Liberation Committee. He stated very positively his feeling that our representative was aware of these plans and had deliberately withheld information from him while he was allegedly giving our representative all the information he had. It became clear that his greatest fear was that the Americans and the British were selling out Greek interests in order to buy off Tito. He added that American intervention with the Italians accomplished the release of Abas Elmasi from prison when the formation of the Albanian Committee was announced. He planned to discuss the entire question with the Greek Permanent Under-Secretary of Foreign Affairs on 30 August.

[]
Assistant Director
Special Operations

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